

# Introduction to The Precepts of Biblical Research

The contents of this book were composed from transcripts of a series of classes on Precepts of Biblical Research.

With this book as your guide, you'll learn to illuminate the depths of the scriptures, revealing the profound wisdom that is hidden from plain sight. Moreover, you'll gain the ability to distinguish fact from truth, recognizing the vital yet often overlooked influence of ancient customs and cultural context on the canonical texts.

A common pitfall in biblical study is the tendency to focus on isolated passages, thus neglecting the overarching narrative and revelation of the scriptures.

So, when you talk about biblical research, what does it mean? How do you research? I'm going to cover the major areas of research so you can begin researching the scriptures for yourself. I'm not going to go into concordances, or interlinears, or how to use reference books because the purpose of this book is to give you the foundation, the precepts of biblical research.

Now the question boils down to, what is the difference?

Well, let me give you an example, an illustration from a personal experience that changed my life.

## *Lessons from the Deep: A Transformative Analogy*

Years ago, I learned to scuba dive on the island of Guam. I even became pretty proficient at it. Scuba diving became my favorite hobby, and I spent most of my spare time in this awesome underwater world. Its radiant beauty had quite an impact on me. To this day I still have quite an impressive collection of rare seashells and coral that are absolutely magnificent, as reminders of my aquatic adventures. Now what's fascinating about scuba diving, is you've only got a small area of depth in which you can find living creatures. It basically starts at about 15 feet down and then from 15 to about 30 to 40 feet. That's where all the life is. After that, it starts diminishing to where there's no more coral and there's even less life, and it gets less and less the deeper you go.

On the surface, there's too much action going in that the first 10 to 15 feet. It's all beat up by the constant wave action. So, all life is in that little section of 15 to 30 feet below the surface. The ever changing and growing coral reefs of Guam are absolutely breathtaking, brimming with life. They spread all along the length of the island, and go all the way down to Palau, New Zealand, New Guinea, and Australia. They provide some magnificent diving.

What I love about diving in the vibrant coral reefs, is the dazzling marine life. Schools of tropical fish in every imaginable color darting through the crystal-clear waters, their scales shimmering like precious gems in the filtered sunlight.

I have a tremendous amount of stories I could share.

But one day I just stopped diving.

It wasn't because I was scared, though there are some scary creatures in the deep. And I've come close to dying many times in my life, and that's okay. But one thing happened to me that changed my entire life and stopped me from diving. And it's not a bad thing.

Let me explain to you what it was.

Among the Guamanian natives, I had heard whispers of an ethereal underwater grotto – a secret cavern filled with radiant shimmering light, incandescent coral and tranquil water, where the vibrant colored fish and other sea creatures had no fear of intruders into their domain. As a seasoned diver, I initially dismissed these tales as legends or fanciful exaggerations. That all changed on my last dive off the Guamanian coast.

It was a day in late Summer, and as usual I got my gear on, then slipped beneath the waves once more. As I descended, I quickly noted something unusual, the absence of marine life along the reef that day. Intrigued, I slowly finned inward along the blanketing reef until I stumbled upon a large crevice, like a portal, into a hidden world beyond my wildest imaginings.

I had never experienced anything like that in my entire life.

Now the problem was, I had started my dive late in the day, about 2 o'clock. While I was in awe and bewilderment, thoroughly enjoying this surreal environment, I lost track of time, and started to notice that the sunlight was starting to fade. So, I quickly checked my pressure gauge, and it showed my air was running low, so I was forced to leave.

When I surfaced, I tried to memorize where it was at, so I could return again. The next day, I attempted to search for the grotto again, but couldn't find it. Every week after that, I went diving to find it. Despite my best efforts I could never locate that hidden entrance to that mystical place. I even asked other divers about it. Have you seen it? They said, seen what? I said, did you see the underwater grotto? And I explained it to them. They go, you narked out? That's a narcosis when you spend too much time too deep. It's like getting drunk. I go, no man, I was only in 35 to 40 feet of water. Well, you just had a dream. No. It wasn't a dream. I'm serious. I experienced it. It was real. Finally, I met a Guamanian who was a diver. He said, he'd also witnessed it first hand, sharing my awe, but he too was unable to return to find the grotto's elusive entrance.

## ***Unveiling the Hidden Depths of Biblical Truth***

"...seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

This profound promise from Jesus beckons those who earnestly seek truth to embark on a journey of discovery into the depths of Biblical accuracy. It is an invitation extended to all who hunger and thirst for righteousness, encouraging them to actively pursue the knowledge, wisdom and understanding that can only be found within the pages of the Bible.

The precepts you will learn here are foundational principles that reveal the Bible's profound truth. Like a magnificent grotto waiting to be discovered, the scriptures hold awe-inspiring revelations that will leave you breathless as you witness the depths of beauty and complexity in a way you never imagined.

As you embark of this journey to uncover the hidden mysteries within this ancient text, you will discover that the scriptures are a wellspring of vibrant inspiration, imparting timeless wisdom and offer divine instruction from the very breath of God.

As you earnestly pursue truth and integrate the precepts from this book into your life, you'll find yourself better equipped to navigate the journey towards an extraordinary life, supported by the wisdom and insights within these pages.

# CHAPTER 1

## *What is the Word of God*

When people discuss the Bible with me, they often use various terms and phrases that require explanation. What's the distinction between the Word of God and the word of men? What about the word of man concerning God?

What does God say about Himself? And are we reading it correctly?

Let's go through some basics. People say, "Well, I've got this Bible, I got that Bible." All right, let's consider that. Which Bible do we use? Which Bible is the best?

The most popular Bibles are:

American Standard Version, New English Translation, Revised Standard Version, Young's Literal Translation, New Living Translation, King James Version, Webster's Bible, Morphological Greek New Testament, International Version, English Standard Version, Christian Bible, Textus Receptus, Darby Translation, New King James Version, Reina-Valera for those who are of Spanish background, Westminster Leningrad Codex, and Lamsa Bible.

In fact, there are over 2000 different translations and versions. But what I've done here is taken the basics. Whenever you go to learn about biblical research, people always bring up these versions. These are all the standards everybody uses for research.

Which is The Word of God? Isn't that an interesting question?

How do you tell what is the Word of God?

## *Comparing Bible Versions*

Let's consider this because we're into biblical research, and you've got to be honest, you can't be guessing. If you want to be religious then have a Bible study, but we are not into Bible study. We're not studying different Bibles. We at the Institute for Biblical Research and Oriental Studies are into biblical research. Is there a difference? Yes.

So let's look at each of these versions. We're going to take one verse and go through all of most popular versions. Let's go to Luke 6:46, it's Jesus speaking. He says in the King James Version, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Let's now compare the other versions using that same verse.

New King James Version: "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"

New Living Translation: "So why do you keep calling me 'Lord, Lord!' when you don't do what I say?"

New International Version: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

English Standard Version: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

Christian Standard Bible: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things I say?"

Reina-Valera: "¿Por qué me llamáis, Señor, Señor, y no hacéis lo que yo digo?"

New American Standard: "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

New English Translation: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do what I tell you?"

Revised Standard Version: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

Is there a hint here to what's going on? So, someone says, "I go by this version or by that version." What's wrong with these versions? Not a single thing. Where is the distinction? Where's the difference? We just read that one verse in each of those versions, they are basically saying the same thing, in every single one.

The problem is either no one reads it, or gives value or credence to what has been written.

Webster's Bible: "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say?"

Latin Vulgate: "quid autem vocatis me Domine Domine et non facitis quae dico"

What does that say in Latin? Same thing.

What excuse have we? This becomes a real challenge. People say, "I use the Revised Standard Version, I use this or that." That's ducky. What's the Word of God? Jesus made some things pretty clear here. I don't care what version it is. What did Jesus say?

So from the verse in Luke 6:46, we can conclude that if the anointed Jesus of Nazareth is our Lord, then we must DO what he said. Right? And yet, how many really know what he said?

### ***The Logical Implications of Calling Jesus Lord***

All right, let's logically look at this. If Jesus is our Lord, then we must do what he said, yes? Or he's not our Lord.

If we do not do what He says, what's the conclusion? Then the anointed Jesus is NOT our Lord.

If the anointed Jesus of Nazareth is our Lord, and we do not do what He says, then what's left?

Then either: A. the Jesus we have made Lord is not the Jesus of the Scriptures

B. we do not know what Jesus said

C. we do not understand what Jesus said.

People can be so sincere, and they really are emphatic. They just say, "What would Jesus do?" But they really don't know Jesus if they never read his words. I don't care what anyone says, I don't care what version it is. Are there some advantages to certain versions than others? Yes. But if you speak English, I suggest any one of those versions, as they are the standard.

So in conclusion; either we do not know what Jesus said, or we do not understand what Jesus said. Those are the only alternatives, right? Or Jesus is not our Lord.

## *The Challenges of Translation*

Now let's talk about translation. What exactly are we dealing with here? According to the dictionary, translation is "an act, process, or instance of translating, such as a rendering from one language into another." It's also the product of such a rendering. Sounds simple enough, right? How hard can it be?

Well, let me tell you, there's a big problem when you try to translate from one language to another.

Let's take the words "hot dog" and translate them literally into another language. What image pops into their heads? A heat-exhausted canine. That poor dog, get him some water!

Or how about translating these common English figures of speech into any language, "Kill the light," what do you do? Shoot it? "My engine died," do you have a funeral service, and bury it in your backyard?

You see, you can't just translate word for word and expect it to make sense. I don't care how fantastic the translation is supposed to be. It just doesn't work that way.

Here's another one for you. What about the phrase "cheesy grin"? Go ahead, try to translate that into Spanish, German, or any other language. It's a disaster waiting to happen. In English, a cheesy grin is a grin that's not sincere. But if you just say "cheesy" and "grin" in another language, you'll end up with something like "smiling with cheese particles in your teeth." Talk about lost in translation!

That's where interpretation comes in. When you interpret, you find an equivalent in the other language that captures the meaning, not just the words. But even then, it's a challenge. Trust me, I've taught in other languages, and I can't tell you how many times I've wanted to bang my head against the wall. I'm like, "How do you say this?" And the answer is, you can't. There's just no equivalent.

So, our poor "cheesy grin" ends up as "smiling with cheese particles in your teeth." It's enough to make you want to throw your hands up in despair.

And what about idioms? Take "I'll give you a rain check." You translate "rain" and "check," and suddenly you've got an invoice for rain. I don't know about you, but I've never had to pay for rain before.

But seriously, this is the problem you run into when you're trying to bridge the gap between cultures and languages. It's not just about the words; it's about conveying the meaning, the context, and the cultural nuances. And sometimes, there just isn't a perfect fit.

I could go on and on with examples, but I think you get the picture.

So, the next time you're trying to communicate across languages, remember: it's not just about the words, it's about the heart of the message. And if all else fails, just smile – but make sure there's no cheese in your teeth!

This is the basics, the foundation of biblical research.

## *Difficulties in Language and Culture*

Let's travel back in time just 75 years. Now imagine a culture with no written language, where history and knowledge has been passed down orally from generation to generation. Take the Inuit people of the Arctic Circle, for example. Their language has over 2,000 distinct words for snow and 40 different words just for seal. How could one even begin to translate concepts from their world into English?



The vast divide between the traditional Inuit culture and our modern ways highlights a critical issue - the impossibility of accurate translation without understanding the full cultural context. Words and phrases simply do not carry over when the cultural experiences are worlds apart.

Imagine us city dwellers trying to convey concepts like "avenue," "highway," or "freeway" to someone from a nomadic seal-hunting world. These terms, so integral to our urban existence, would be alien and meaningless to them. Similarly, figures of speech common in English, such as "step on it" or "he's got a frog in his throat," lose their significance outside our cultural context.

In our modern Western culture, much of our daily life revolves around electricity and roads. Phrases like "Don't go down that path, it's a dead end," "That's a dead-end job," or "I need to go home and unplug" are deeply ingrained in our language and experiences. However, these expressions do not translate into Inuit culture, where the very concepts of roads, career paths, and electronic devices are foreign.

Conversely, the Inuit have a rich vocabulary for describing snow, with terms that capture its various textures, consistencies, and uses. These nuanced distinctions, so essential to their way of life, are foreign to us, who never experience such diverse snow conditions.

From the earliest encounters between Inuit and Western explorers, communication proved nearly impossible, with translations often failing to convey the intended meaning. The concept of a house, for example, differs drastically between the two cultures. While we might say, "I'm going to the market to get some food," the very notion of a market would be puzzling to someone from a traditional Inuit community, where food is acquired through hunting and gathering.

These linguistic and conceptual disparities underscore the vast cultural divide, reminding us of the challenges inherent in cross-cultural communication and understanding.

In Inuit culture, even seemingly familiar terms can have drastically different meanings. For instance, when Inuit go 'clubbing,' they're not heading out for drinks at a nightclub. Instead, they're embarking on a seal hunting expedition, as seals have been a primary source of sustenance for their communities for generations.

Even the concept of baby food takes on a new meaning in Inuit culture. While Westerners might think of little jars of Gerbers baby food, Inuit mothers traditionally fed their babies in a much different way. They'd offer seal eyes to the baby to suck on for a nutritional snack. Moms also chewed food until it was soft and then transferred it directly into the baby's mouth. These practices, though they may seem unusual or even off-putting to outsiders, were well-adapted to the Inuit's unique environment and way of life.

In a land devoid of grocery stores or markets the Inuit relied on their ingenuity to obtain the nutrients essential for their survival. For example, they obtained their greens from the partially digested contents of a seal's stomach. While seals primarily eat krill, crustaceans, and fish, they also consume seaweed, which provided the Inuit with a source of vegetable matter. So, if an Inuit invited you over for lunch, you might be surprised by what's on the menu.

The Inuit's unique practices and traditions have been shaped by the harsh Arctic environment and their reliance on hunting and gathering for survival.

Let's dig a little deeper, shall we?

### *Cultural Differences in Daily Life*

In the traditional Inuit way of life, as it existed for centuries until about 70 years ago, igloos were their essential form of shelter. These innovative structures were built using blocks of snow and could be constructed relatively quickly, providing a warm and secure refuge from the arduous Arctic elements. Igloos were used as temporary dwellings during hunting and fishing expeditions, as well as for longer-term habitation for Inuit families.



*Inuit igloos*

The basic igloo consists of a cooking area, a sleeping area, and a place for storage, that is about it.

Traditional Inuit dwellings were ingeniously designed specifically for survival in the harsh Arctic environment, where temperatures can plummet to a bone-chilling -40 degrees Fahrenheit.



How about transportation in the Inuit culture? Even today, in the Arctic, what is the best and most reliable mode of transportation to use for going hunting after a heavy snowfall? What do the intrepid hunters do? They harness up their team of canine companions, and hop on a sled.



These dogsleds, using furry, four-legged powerhouses are the ultimate snow-conquering machines. With their lightweight bodies and oversized paws, they practically float over the freshly fallen snow. And the sled is like a comfy sofa on skis.

So, if you want to travel anywhere during the wintertime, this is it. Period.

Can you see how trying to translate the traditional lifestyle of the Arctic Inuit into our modern culture is a challenging if not impossible task? The stark differences between their way of life and ours make it difficult to find meaningful equivalents. We don't reside in igloos or rely on dogsleds for transportation, which highlights the vast cultural divide.

Attempts to interpret these falls short. What do we have in our culture that can even possibly compare to their lifestyle? How would you interpret a dogsled, or a igloo into things we can relate to? You could try to equate a dogsled with a snowmobile, or an igloo with a winter cottage, but these comparisons fail to capture the essence and significance of the original concepts. The dogsled and igloo are intrinsically tied to the Inuit's relationship with their environment, their survival techniques, and their cultural identity.

Substituting these traditional elements with modern counterparts strips away the rich cultural context. Such interpretations may make the Inuit lifestyle seem more relatable to outsiders, but they ultimately fail to convey the depth and complexity of their culture.

Are you beginning to understand the problem with translations, and interpretations? You have got to learn the culture, to understand their priorities, how they live, when and where they lived. Or you don't understand anything. This is crucial when it comes to understanding biblical culture, which we will be covering in great detail.

## *The Complexity of Words*

To illustrate the depth of this cultural divide, let's examine the Inuit word "nuiilek" from the Yupik tribe. A direct translation is: "crushed ice beginning to spread out, dangerous to walk on. The ice is dissolving, but still not dispersed in water, although it is vulnerable for one to step through and to sink. Sometimes seals can even surface on this because the water is starting to disappear."

One single word encompasses a rich, multifaceted concept describing different phases of ice, the risks to the seal hunters, and the opportunities when seals appear. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of such words detailing the intricacies of the environment with a level of sophistication foreign to our language and modern life.

Ok, so now you understanding what "nuiilek" means right? How would you translate it? You see the problem?

These examples serve to illustrate the drastic differences between the traditional Inuit culture and the modern Western world just 75 years ago. How about the diversity of biblical culture? Are we trying to relate it to our modern world? How much depth of understanding are we missing, not knowing the richness of the culture and the original meanings of the scriptures?

To properly translate from one language to another, you have to know the customs and culture of the language you are translating from. Or else you won't know that there are no corresponding words that make sense. What is valuable, and how valuable is it compared to other things that make up their world?

## *Greeting in the East*

When greeting someone in the East for the first time, what do you do? For one thing you do not go up and just start talking to them, or shake their hand. That is a big NO! What's the problem? Different culture, different mannerisms.

First, you must make eye contact with the person you wish to greet. Then, raise your eyebrows ever so slightly, to say, "I acknowledge your presence." If they respond with a similar eyebrow raise, congratulations! You've just been granted permission to approach and chat. If not, well, you might as well be invisible. And make sure you aren't wearing sunglasses, because without eye contact you are invisible!

But the intricacies of Eastern greetings don't stop there. The social hierarchy and context play a crucial role. Are you in the presence of an elder, a woman, or a child? Are you entering a room or a house for the first time? Each scenario requires a specific set of customs and protocols.

There are many cultural nuances in communication and mannerisms across the globe, even in modern times. How about in biblical times?

In chapter 4 we will delve in to the significance of bowing in the Eastern culture, and what it means.

## ***The Concept of a Day***

Cultural differences extend to the very concept of a day. You know what a day is, right? Of course you do, in our Western culture a day is a 24-hour period, starting at midnight and ending at 11:59pm. This is ingrained in our daily lives. But is that the same in other cultures?

When you say "a day" to an Inuit living in the Arctic circle, what does that mean? They have six months of sun in the sky, never setting. And then six months of night without sunrise. In other words, a day is six months long. The concept of a year means a day and a night. That's a long time.

When they say, "I'll be back in a day and a night." You will not see them for a whole year.

Understand, language reflects the world in which we live. And to try to force one's own culture on another's is futile.

Is there any translation that works for the Arctic Inuit? Even the concept of a day, the rising and the setting of the sun, is not the same.

## ***The Importance of Culture, Customs, and Figures of Speech in Biblical Interpretation***

Much like my experience of uncovering that magnificent hidden grotto beneath the waves, the process of biblical interpretation involves a deep and reverent exploration of the scriptures, inviting us to explore the profound depths of God's Word. To truly grasp the essence and scope of the scriptures requires a comprehensive approach.

Biblical research is not running around asking everyone their opinion. To achieve a deeper understanding, we must immerse ourselves in the world of the bible culture. When you read the scriptures, ask yourself, what did they value? What was important to them? How did they communicate and express themselves? How did they live?

What are the figures of speech, or idioms? What is said is not what is meant. How many parts in the Bible does it say something totally different? There are over 200 figures of speech used in the Bible. How many of them do you know?

Only by exploring these questions and delving into the cultural, historical, and linguistic context in which the scriptures were written, we can uncover the hidden treasures, and discover the timeless truth that God has woven into the fabric of His Word.

Without this thorough research into the culture, customs, and figures of speech, the Bible's context will remain obscure, and the full relevance cannot be comprehended.

## *The Difficulty of Translating Cultural Customs*

Remember that no translation can be accurate. Why? Because it doesn't move from one language into another. For instance- how would you translate the Fourth of July to someone in Germany? It's just the fourth day of July. It comes right before the fifth and right after the third. So, what's the big deal? It means a lot to us in the USA. In Mexico they celebrate Cinco de Mayo. That's when they sank the mayonnaise ship on Cinco de Mayo. Just kidding. That's the Mexican Independence Day. What was England's day of independence? England didn't have an Independence Day. We in the US got independence from them.

I'm going to reiterate this again, because it is so crucial, no translation or version can be accurate without knowing the culture, customs, figures of speech, and mannerisms of that culture.

Ok, people say I have my Bible, it's the truth. No, it's not. If you get the wrong images, you don't have anything unless you think an igloo is a winter cottage, and a dogsled is a snowmobile. No!

So, what's the Word of God? Which scriptures do you go by? Which version is the Word of God? It has nothing to do with that. Where do you get the best images? You can give me any version. I can work with it, no problem. Because I know the culture, I know the customs, I know the limitations of the translator. What were they translating from? Were they familiar with the culture? Did they speak the language? Who paid for the translation? Whoever pays for it gets to tell how it should be done.

So, to properly translate, what must you know first?

You need to know the customs and culture of the language that you are translating from. If you don't, it won't work.

If you want to have fun, go on Google and type in "the world's greatest errors in translation." We almost went to war several times over mistranslations because certain words didn't translate correctly.

We only know our own culture. But when you are in the company of people from other cultures what do you do? What are the social taboos, or cultural boundaries, that you do not cross? Every culture has their own. Even in our modern world there are differences we need to be aware of.

First, let's talk about the Russians. Let's say you're sitting across the table from a group of them, engaging in a lively discussion, when suddenly, one of them takes off their shoe and slams it on the table. You're thinking, "Is this a new way to squash a pesky fly?" No, you've just witnessed a powerful gesture of defiance or protest. And heaven forbid they throw that shoe at you, what does that mean?

Still today in many countries, particularly parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, using your left hand to touch someone, especially a woman, is like signing your own death warrant. It's the ultimate insult, and you might find yourself in a hospital bed or worse if you're not careful. Why you ask? Because the left hand is considered the hand of cursing, it's literally the toilet hand. If you are ever invited to eat with anyone from these countries, be sure to keep your left hand off the table.

How about intricate dining etiquette? Let's say you're a guest of someone in the East, seated at a table, with an exquisite array of delectable dishes before you. But where do you start? What's the proper sequence? One wrong move, and you might find yourself wearing the meal rather than eating it. In some cultures, you might offend your hosts so badly that they'll toss the entire feast out

the window, along with your chances of ever being invited back. I know this by experience. Remember what I said about the left hand? Sometimes we learn the hard way.

### *New Way of Thinking*

Can a man and woman today live by every word of God? It was written to a different culture, way different than ours. But once you learn it and understand it, you can.

An important key is in this verse:

Psalms 119:83 - "For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet I do not forget thy statutes." What the heck is that about? How do you get a bottle in the smoke? How does that work? Why is it bad to have bottles in the smoke?

Here's another one. Matthew 9:17 - "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles..." Why not? "...else bottles break and the wine runneth out." Really?

What the heck is Jesus talking about? This doesn't make sense, does it? We think of glass bottles, right? And they don't break unless we drop them. What's the difference if I put old wine or new wine into them? Heck, we recycle bottles all the time. See the problem when we look at the scriptures through our modern cultural lenses?

"Neither do men put new wine into old bottles else the bottles break and the new wine runneth out and the bottles perish." No, they don't. "But they put new wine in new bottles." Why don't they put wine into old bottles? What is He talking about?

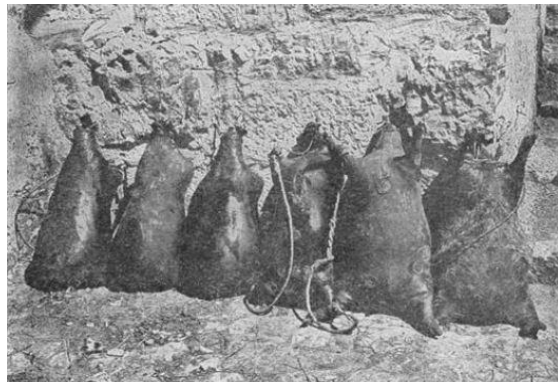
And how do you preserve a bottle by putting your wine in it?

This makes absolutely zero sense to us. Luke 5:37-38 - "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles..." Really? "...and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved."

What the heck is that talking about?

Why did the translator translate those bottles? What does that word mean, when this was written?

If we go back 150 years, we have remnants of it.



These are goatskin bottles. They actually skinned the animal from the first joint, the elbow, then pulled the skin off, and dried it out. The neck and the legs were tied, and the neck of the animal became the neck of the bottle. A true marvel of ancient ingenuity, yes? These were durable, leak-proof containers, that held water or wine. When you wanted some water, you'd undo the spout, pour out some water, and tie it back up. Not a problem.

They would hang the goat skins on the wall and they would last a long time.

But the problem is, where did people cook? Houses were mostly made of clay, what we'd call adobe. There would be a fire pit smack dab in the middle, with a hole in the roof right above it. This is where they cooked their food. When afternoon rolled around, the heat outside would already be quite oppressive. But inside? With smoke filling the room it turns the house into a veritable oven. Everyone, including the resident goatskin bottle, felt the heat. So, what would they do? As recorded in the book of Acts, they'd go up on the roof, like Peter did. They would sit there and wait till the temperature cooled down. While the food was cooking and the house was full of smoke that poor goatskin was hanging on the wall, day after day, enduring the relentless assault of smoke and heat. It became a bottle in the smoke. Slowly but surely, the outside would crack and dry out. It was only a matter of time before the bottle would burst.

Jesus is talking about wine, and if you use an old bottle that has already started to crack, for wine that's a really expensive thing to lose. When it breaks, it's gone.

Now let's go back and see if we understand the verse better. "For as I become a bottle in the smoke," hanging up there feeling the heat, and smoke, day in and day out, starting to crack on the outside, there's water or wine on the inside, but the outside is cracking and eventually it will break. It will only last so long in the heat and smoke.

So in other words, when the Word of God, comes into you, don't be the same person. You put new wine, which is a symbol of life, into an old person it's not going to work. It is going to burst. Jesus is saying that what he is giving requires a new way of thinking, a new priority, a new perspective, and if you can't do it, it'll destroy your life.

It's one or the other. You can't put it into old bottles. That's what he's talking about.

Let's look at another one. Ready?

## *The Three Days and Three Nights Conundrum*

Matthew 12:40 - "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Jonah was for three days and three nights dead inside the whale.

So it says the Son of man, which Jesus is speaking of himself. I'm teaching you what Jesus taught.

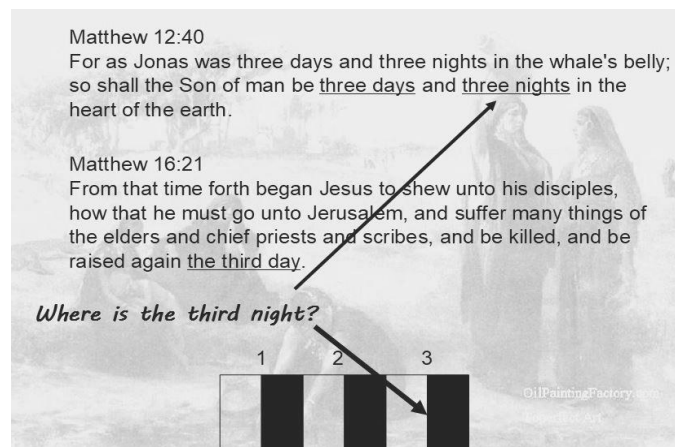
I'm trying to get you to the grotto; to get you into it so you can get a glimpse of this. It's not what you think. It's totally different. It's magnificent. It's beautiful. And I've never been able to find any place close to it. I would love to go back if I could find it. Since nothing else compared, I stopped diving. Nothing compares to when you actually get a sample of God's truth. Nothing compares.

But without understanding the culture, customs, and figures of speech, you are blind. All the images you get are wrong. That's why it's not to know, it's to do. If you do not do, you do not understand.

Matthew 16:21 - "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." So, he's going to be dead for three days and three nights.

We're not talking Arctic days here. We're talking Biblical days. Could there be a difference? Yes.

So Jesus was raised the third day. Right? Well, we've got a problem with that.



Look at the graph above. There's a day and a night, that's day 1. Next day and night is day 2, and what are we following this?

Now what's going to happen the third day? Whoops, He raised the third day. What happened to Mr. Night?

The scripture says three days and three nights.

So if he was raised the third day, what's missing? The third night. And you know what people say? "Well, it doesn't really mean what it says." Yes, it does! "Well, a day and a night is a figure of speech." No, it isn't. Wrong culture.

I used to get a kick out of this when I was living in Asia. I'd say I would show up at seven o'clock and I'd show up at like 7:15 or whatever. And they wouldn't let me in. I'd be "Hey, what's up?" "You said you'd be here at seven." I go, "Yeah, it's fifteen after." They'd say "you're late" and close the door. I'm like, "What?" In our culture, it doesn't make a difference when we show up. But boy, in Asia, you better be exact. You can come in early, but you do not show up late. Your integrity goes right down the drain. They will never trust you. Of course, in Mexico, it's a different culture. You say the party starts at seven. Nobody shows up until nine. Different culture.

Understand the problem? What culture are we dealing with?

Everybody assumes that the Bible was written in their culture. No, no, no, it doesn't work that way. We're talking about a culture of people that say what they mean and mean what they say. Integrity is of utmost. A salt covenant says what you speak will always be the truth. The whole culture is built on a salt covenant. You cannot lie. You have to be precise. That's what the salt covenant is all about.

So we have a real problem here, because in Matthew chapter 12, it says, "three days and three nights." Then Matthew chapter 16, just four chapters later, "the third day." Are you saying Jesus really didn't mean what he said? Yes, he did! He was in the grave, dead for three days and three nights, and he rose the third day. So what's up? Why can't we see that? It's not part of our culture.

Was he three days and three nights in the grave? Yes. There's tons of documentation for that, including the Apostle Paul.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." What scripture are we talking about? Paul wrote this, like 16 years later, it verifies what it said in Matthew.

Did he raise the third day? Yes. The Word of God cannot contradict itself. So what's the answer?

Where's the third night?

Well, the answer is in Genesis.



## ***From Dusk till Dawn: Unraveling the Biblical Concept of a Day"***

Genesis 1:5 - "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

Did you read that correctly?

"And the evening and the morning were the first day." Wait a minute, I'm sure you're thinking. Evening and then morning? Isn't it supposed to be the other way around?

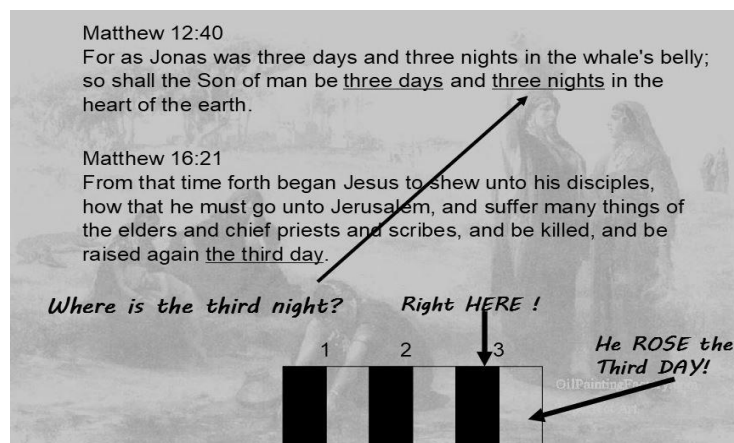
In the scriptures, a day doesn't start with the crack of dawn and end with the stroke of midnight like in our culture. No.

As the sun sinks below the skyline, it paints the firmament in an awe-inspiring spectrum of citrus and coral, heralding the dawn of a fresh day.

So when you think of the Jewish Sabbath day, it doesn't kick off on Saturday morning like you might expect. Instead, it starts at sunset on Friday, and ends on Saturday at sunset.

This concept of a day starting in the evening is woven throughout the tapestry of the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation hiding in plain sight for those with eyes to see.

So now let's calculate this using night then day, as established in Genesis and see what we get.



Now we start with a night then day which is day 1. Then we have a night and day which is day 2. Then we have a night and day which is the 3rd day. When did He rise? He rose the 3rd day. Tada!

Why was that difficult to grasp? The problem is that we tend to look at the scriptures through our own cultural lenses. It doesn't work like that. We have to see through the perspective of the culture in which it was written.

## *Living by Every Word of God*

Can a man or woman live by every word of God?

Yes!

Now understand that there are several parts of the Bible that were written in Egypt that had different cultures. There are certain parts that were written in Babylon. Did they have a different culture? Yes. Certain parts were written during the time of the captivity of Rome. Did that make a difference? Yes, there were certain parts written in the captivity of Greece, did that make any difference? Yes.

But The Word of God has prevailed throughout time, cultures, and languages, as God Himself does not change. Our job, as researchers of the Truth, is to learn God's thoughts and will through His Word, as it was written.

Why am I so emphatic about this? Because people in this day and time do not grasp the importance of this. They think everything written in the Bible is written to us, to our culture. It is not! And if we try to interpret it according to our perception we do not have the True Word of God.

You've got to know the culture, the customs, value systems, and very importantly the time period which it was given, how they measured time. Everything is different and when you see from that perspective, it's like entering into this magnificent underwater cavern that no one else has seen. It changes your whole world. And the more time you spend in it, the more you want to come back. It's a life like no other!

Our ultimate goal is to live by every word of God, to have God's thoughts, and images as our own. This is the True Way of Life, as God intended us to live.